

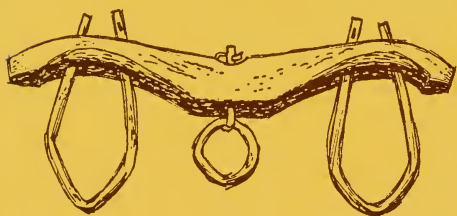
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Lincoln, descendant of first
family Americans

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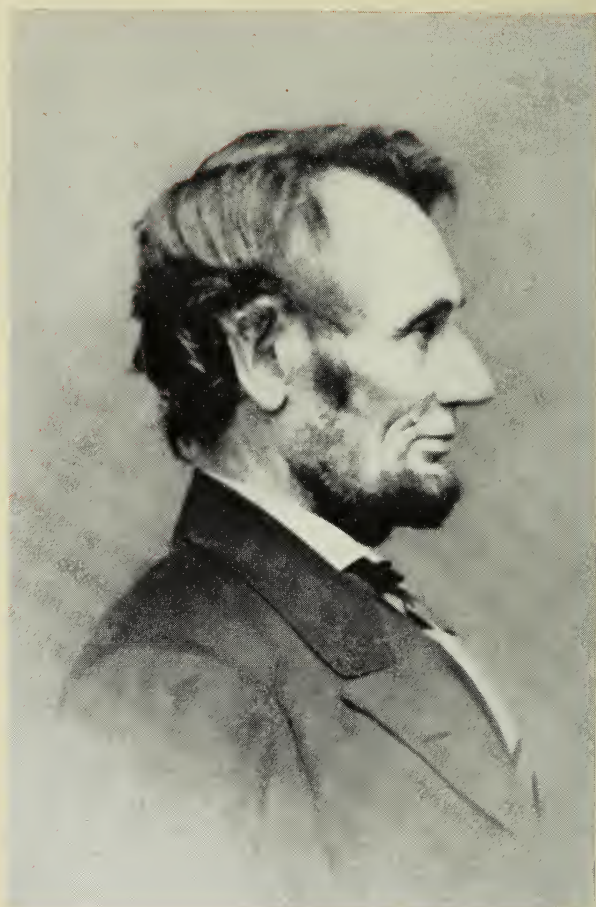
DESCENDANT OF FIRST
FAMILY AMERICANS

By RALPH G. LINDSTROM



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*A popular likeness of
Abraham Lincoln
from a Brady photograph*

URBANA

L I N C O L N

DESCENDANT OF FIRST
FAMILY AMERICANS


By RALPH G. LINDSTROM

with Foreword

By F. RAY RISDON

LINCOLN FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

1943



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FOREWORD

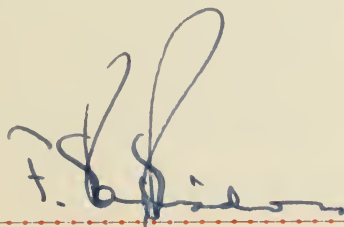
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So MUCH of the material that has appeared in the public press concerning the Lincoln family and Abraham Lincoln's antecedents has been compounded of mixed fact and fiction, or has been based on idle tradition, or tintured by sectional prejudice, that it is wholly unreliable as a correct appraisal of the man himself or as a record of his immediate ancestry.

It is therefore refreshing to find, among the current newspaper offerings, an article so factual, and withal so interestingly written, as the one by Ralph G. Lindstrom, appearing in the *Los Angeles Times*' HOME of February 7, 1943, and bearing the arresting title given in this booklet.

Desiring to preserve this worthwhile and timely contribution in pamphlet form, for ready reference by students and collectors, the Lincoln Fellowship of Southern California has reprinted this article as one of its official publications, in token of its sincere appreciation of the author's research and scholarship in the realm of Lincolniana.

F. RAY RISDON

22 Jan 43 d.w. 50
Hollywood
March 21, 1943



THE CIVIC skies above “the last, best hope of earth” were dark and lowering.

Secession and civil war threatened. A strong, rugged, unshakable helmsman was needed. An obscure Illinois prairie editor saw one man’s greatness and fitness for the job. Editor Jesse W. Fell was telling his readers that Abraham Lincoln should be elected the next President of the United States. There had been country-wide discussion of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Lincoln’s Cooper Union speech was yet to come. So Fell insisted on an autobiography, and modest Abraham Lincoln wrote in December, 1859:

¶ “My parents were both born in Virginia of undistinguished families—second families, perhaps I should say.”

¶ But Lincoln was wrong! His paternal ancestry was among the finest in England and America. We shall see that he came of a “first family.”

¶ Why, at the moment of President Lincoln’s birth, one of his relatives, Levi Lincoln, Sr., was Governor of Massachusetts! This Governor Lincoln and his brother, Dr. Abraham Lincoln, for a quarter of a century were powerful fac-

tors in New England politics—so powerful that Levi's son, Levi, Jr., was made Governor of Massachusetts in 1825 by 35,000 out of 37,000 votes cast. He served a longer term in that office than any other of Massachusetts' more than 50 Governors. Not only this but Enoch Lincoln, younger brother of Levi, Jr., at the same time served for three terms as Governor of the State of Maine. And Levi, Jr., in 1864, as Presidential elector, cast his vote for his modest kinsman, Abraham Lincoln, who mistakenly believed he came from "second families!"

¶ Lincoln's assassination found both men still unaware that they had a common ancestor, Samuel Lincoln, the President's great-great-great-great-grandfather. Still another honored in this family was a descendant of Samuel who became an Attorney General of the United States.

¶ President Lincoln was never able to trace his ancestry back of his paternal grandfather for whom he was named. He knew that Grandfather Abraham Lincoln went to Kentucky from Rockingham County, Virginia, and that prior ancestors came from Berks County, Pennsylvania. Further he never learned.

¶ Also, Lincoln knew about "those famous Lincolns" of Massachusetts. Some-

what in awe he wrote to Editor Fell:

“An effort to identify them (Lincoln’s ancestors) with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham and the like.”

¶ Not only is it true that these famous Lincolns with “similarity of Christian names” were in his ancestral family but it is also true that this modest prairie statesman became the most illustrious Lincoln of them all!



WHAT STRANGE turn in the economic and social experience of a branch of a family of self-reliant, successful men could bring so complete a break in knowledge of ancestry? It is not difficult to understand when the facts are known. William H. Herndon’s vulgar misconception that we must have a Lincoln emerging from “a silent, putrid pool” has been accepted too long by many writers.

¶ Grandfather Abraham Lincoln was born of Great-grandfather John Lincoln in Berks County, Pennsylvania, in 1744. Remember that those were days of pioneering. This Abraham went to Virginia as a young single man. He accumulated

substantial landholdings in Virginia, where he married and had three sons and two daughters. In 1780 he sold all he had in Virginia and with men such as Daniel Boone took his family through the wilderness of Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. Facility of communications was not of those days.

¶ Virginia's westernmost point is the top of a spearhead separating Kentucky to the north and Tennessee to the south. Cumberland Gap is the junction of the three States. All pioneers from Virginia moved west through this mountain pass, but at Cumberland Gap some shunted back into the East Tennessee counties. These people, too, are of finest English stock.

¶ Others, including the Lincolns, went on north and west. Grandfather Abraham Lincoln broke virgin soil on 400 acres of land in Jefferson County, Kentucky, up near the Ohio River. Then stark tragedy struck when President Lincoln's father, Thomas, was only 6 and the President's grandfather, Abraham, only 42. A stalking Indian shot and instantly killed Grandfather Abraham and was about to kidnap Thomas when another son, Mordecai, shot the Indian and saved Thomas.

¶ With her five young children, one younger even than 6-year-old Thomas,

Grandmother Bersheba Lincoln moved to Washington County in Kentucky. Thus did hardship become the lot of this branch of the Lincolns. Thomas grew into unlettered manhood, but he was by no means the worthless roustabout that Herndon and other biographers have depicted. Thomas Lincoln accumulated substantial Kentucky landholdings. He was among the thousands of victims of then-defective Kentucky land titles. At Elizabethtown, Ky., Thomas was 16th from the top in assessed values among 90 taxpayers. He was a farmer and mechanic of at least average success.

¶ So Abraham, who became President, was born to this Thomas Lincoln and his wife, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, at a low-ebb point in social and economic comfort in the Lincoln family line. Nevertheless, their status was at least average high. But thus was produced the character of sturdy self-reliance which alone could become the savior of that indivisible union which is still "the last, best hope of earth," as this man himself so aptly put it.

¶ But let's go back, way, way back. We know five generations of the Lincoln ancestors in England. These Lincolns were ever leaders in their community. The fifth in line was Samuel Lincoln,

born in Hingham, who came to New Hingham, Mass., near Boston, in 1637. And what does England, at Hingham there, think of these Lincolns? In the Church of St. Andrew, under a Volk bust of President Lincoln, they proudly point to this tribute inscribed there:

“In this parish for many generations lived the Lincolns, ancestors of Abraham Lincoln, to whom, greatest of that lineage, many citizens of the United States have erected this memorial in the hope that, for all ages between that land and this land and for all lands, there shall be malice toward none with charity for all.”

¶ In New Hingham one can visit the “Old Ship Church,” built in 1681 and in which Samuel Lincoln and many of his descendants have worshipped for generations. One of these descendants was Rev. Calvin Lincoln, minister of that very church while Abraham Lincoln was President.

¶ This elder Samuel had 11 children, one of whom he named Mordecai, who in turn had a son who also bore that name. This second Mordecai was President Lincoln’s great-great-grandfather. He moved to Monmouth County, New Jersey, and married Hannah Saltar, daughter of Richard Saltar, “King’s attorney” and later judge of the county.

Of this union was born John Lincoln, the great-grandfather of President Lincoln. John's father went to Pennsylvania and engaged in the iron industry. John had extensive holdings in New Jersey and Berks County, Pennsylvania.

¶ Daniel Boone's ancestors came into the Lincoln picture in the generation of the second Mordecai, as his son Abraham married Anne Boone. There were at least five marriages between the Boones and the Lincolns in Pennsylvania.

¶ John Lincoln, the great-grandfather, moved into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in 1768 when he was 50. He bought 600 acres of land near Harrisonburg. Again we find the Boone influence. Squire Boone moved from Pennsylvania to Virginia in 1750, and Josiah Boone apparently accompanied John Lincoln's family and also settled in the Shenandoah Valley. It probably was Daniel Boone who persuaded John's son, Abraham, the President's grandfather, to migrate to Kentucky.



THIS SAME Abraham, the grandfather, became a captain in the United States Army. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln of Revolutionary War fame was a descendant

of a brother of Samuel Lincoln, the common ancestor.

¶ When communication is poor, word-of-mouth tradition is strong from parent to child. Thomas was unlettered and did not know that nine of the ancestral family were graduates of Harvard by 1827 and another from Brown University. But tradition also must have brought untold other riches of culture and rugged civics to the Lincoln who became President and savior of our country.

¶ Here we have but a few of the attainments in seven generations of Lincolns in America. This is no "second family." It is outstandingly among the first American families. In the seventh generation we find the family capstone in the man whose greatness, if it be kept alive by emulation in American hearts and in civic experience, will forever answer tyrannical pomposity of whatever age in these words of the Great Emancipator:

"As I would not be a slave,
So I would not be a master.
This expresses my idea of democracy.
Whatever differs from this,
To the extent of the difference,
Is no democracy."

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